

Linda Clair
Seven-day Meditation Retreat
Kallara Conference Centre, Australia
30 November – 7 December 2019
Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 6c – Thursday afternoon discussion session

Question: My question is around intention. Yesterday I was really waiting for you to do the guided meditation and it never came. (Laughing) I was thinking, “Linda will say something and I will set my intention and I will do it like this” But finally during the afternoon I gave up and started setting my own intention and doing it. I’ve been doing it for so many hours but I think my intentions are sometimes getting jumbled up and mixed up. For example, at home or here sometimes I go, “Okay I’m going to sit here and be in my body as much as I can and use whatever I can to be here, and I will sit straight and not move and make sure I do not get up, and I want this and I want that.” So it just becomes a mix-up. A lot of your words about what I should be doing, and commands and things just get mixed up and that sometimes can derail the whole thing or get me into the headspace instead of just being here.

This retreat I’ve been really speeding up my consciousness. I’ve been slowing down so much and the consciousness has been really speeding up. I’ve been launching myself into the witnessing state by putting in my effort. It’s almost like I know the way but I cannot say it confidently and totally because it will change. I don’t know what’s to come. So I’ve been going into that witnessing state where I am putting in the effort and am opening up. It starts with breathing and bringing it back and again. And then I start not commenting and I’m just watching and then all of a sudden I’m launched into this effortless watching. It happens many times and sometimes at home. And if I’m really lucky it takes me to that super speed where I’m in hyperspace. The thing with intention is, how do I set my intention? And not just for now, but for all my sittings if possible?

Linda: Well, you take a few deep breaths and your intention is to sit there and give without expecting anything back. Without expecting to feel still, or any depth, or any sort of experience, or anything, or feeling bad or feeling good – just to sit there and really not have any intention to feel anything in particular. Of course that’s a difficult thing to do. To have the intention to just sit there, particularly in a situation like this, is enough. That’s enough. You don’t need a whole lot of rules and regulations. Be as flexible as you can with what’s happening. So if you feel to, get up and do the walking. Don’t make this rule, “I’ve got to sit here for an hour and ten minutes, or hour and a half,” or however long, every time, because things will change.

Why you’ve been feeling so emotional is because of the effort you’ve been putting in. And it’s difficult because we get taught that if you put a lot of effort in and you practice, then you’ll feel good, you’ll feel better. But with this, in the short term, that’s not necessarily the case. You’re going to feel actually more stirred up, more disturbed at times. And often if you do have a really emotional, painful, disturbing retreat, you will feel much, much clearer after it, if you get all that stuff done during the retreat. Try not to expect that but that will probably be the case. So try not to have any particular intention except to sit until the bell, whether that’s half an hour, an hour, two hours – it’s up to you. But don’t have any fixed agenda about what you’re going to do.

Question: So just take a few deep breaths and say to myself, I’m just going to sit here till the bell goes off?

Linda: Do what you can, come back to your breath. It's not like you sit there and think as much as possible. Do your best. But that's all you can do. And sometimes you're going to have much more energy than others. Like you said, it's not to do with luck. None of this is to do with luck. It's to do with – what's what that saying?

Peace isn't luck. Six years silently facing a wall, until the you of your face melts like a candle.

So it's not luck, although it's very popular to say it's luck or grace or whatever. The grace is being here doing this, being able to do it. But you've got to make use of that. So your intention is pure. Don't worry about it. If you get too messed up just come back to the very, very basic practice.

I thought everyone got sick of that, the body scan, after a while.

Question: I find it really powerful. One of the Saturday sats I had people over at my place. I have one of your YouTube videos I've edited a bit. I played that and everybody loved it and had full attention. I find it really powerful because you say really beautiful things like, just listen to the sounds and come back. That sets the tone, intention, everything.

Linda: Okay, I'll do it tomorrow.

Question: We talked before lunch about why do this work.

Linda: Did we? I can't remember. (Laughter)

Question: Well, never mind. Whatever we said, it got me thinking. For me, now getting old, what else is there? I feel now this is the saving for me, to have this ambition to get enlightened, because there's a lot of things I can't have ambition about anymore. My sister is 96 and she's sort of gone into depression because she hasn't any motive now for living. She has two daughters who look after her very well. She worked very hard all her life. She's been very busy. She met every challenge she had but now there's nothing; now she's just being looked after.

Linda: Just waiting to die.

Question: It seems that way. She has a depressed feeling all the time. I won't ever feel like that. I might feel sick of the effort but...

Linda: It's true. It's so true and what a beautiful thing you've said and how true it is. I remember when I was living at Crafers walking around the supermarket seeing everyone going about their stuff, and going, "Oh, thank god I've got this." I'd probably be pretty depressed going, "What's the point in trying something else?" As you get older you do run out of options about doing things and the ambition thing. When you're younger you can use that as an excuse to love life and all that. But as you get older it's like, "Well, what do I do now? Become a grey nomad or something?" 😊
(Laughing)

You'll never feel like that because you'll always have this. And no matter what state you're in, whether you're enlightened or not, there's still more. That becomes your – not ambition, but your anchor – your reason for being. Once you discover, realise, why you're really here you just get on with things. You're not counting down the days till you die.

Question: I loved that when I first heard you say that, that it goes on forever – that you can never finish doing this because there's always something else.

Linda: There's always something more. You never become this perfect being. And that becomes the beauty of it, that it does go on forever. Before realisation there was this big thing, "Oh no, this is going to go on forever." Then when you realise it does go on forever, but in a different way, you realise what eternity really is. Then it's like, "Oh my god, that's incredible! So as long as I'm in this body there's more." You become more and more established in this state and it becomes more and more exciting, the whole thing. So you can never stagnate unless you go, "Yes, this is it. There is the end. There's nothing more to do," which some people do do – maybe they're not enlightened.

Question: That's when they lose their ego?

Linda: No, I think the ego starts to take over again in a different way, what's left, saying, "I am perfect. There's nothing left to do."

Question: Well, I haven't reached that. 😊 (Laughter)

Linda: But that was a beautiful thing to say and realise.

Question: About the aging process, I've been thinking about my body particularly in these retreats and how it's humbling me, because when I was younger I was involved in yoga, and I really felt like I was going somewhere. Then over the years things have happened to my body – all sorts of things and symptoms, and putting on weight – like some poltergeist has taken it over. Sometimes it's frustrating but on the other hand it's still going and I'm still going. I'm observing it more and more if I manage to keep the discipline of the practice going. And the gratefulness I have for it continuing, and trying to relate gently to the parts that need attention, that I wouldn't have done when I was younger. I really check in with it now, "How are you going in there? What do you really need?" and have real kindness for this vessel.

Linda: Yes, as you become more in tune with it, it tells you what it needs. And you don't need to be perfectly healthy to do this or really young or whatever.

Question: You talked about that fine line between what's really pain and what's not. A couple of times I've challenged. It's never pain free but I managed to manage. Another thing I wanted to say that this time when I walked in – I've only been coming for a couple of years – something told me I was home, "Thank goodness I'm here and with this lovely group of people!" I felt really grateful.

Linda: It does feel like home. And it does feel like a sort of family, not that I want to push that and make it feel like a closed thing

Question: It's the repetition of this particular thing together and there is some intimacy that grows.

Linda: Yes, often much more intimacy than with the people you feel you should be closest to in your life or you've spent the time with. There can be a deeper intimacy here. I tell everyone overseas that they need to come over here at least once.

Question: I had some weird stuff going on with my head as well. As I was sitting this afternoon it felt like I was getting a full-on migraine. It was starting in a little spot and it went away. Then I had this strange sensation like pressure on the inside poking out like little bubbles pushing out of my skull. A few times it felt it was the beginning of a migraine but then it would dissipate and then move and start in some other part of my head. Localised and really sharp pressure like a blister.

Linda: Was it sharp, short ones or longer? (Longer.) Was it deep inside your head? (No.) Just watch that. It's not a migraine, it's something else. It's really interesting so watch it.

It can put pressure on you too. I've spoken before how during my practice I did give up caffeine because I was a bit prone to headaches and started to get stuff like that, more and more strongly. I didn't want the physical headache to interfere with the other stuff that was happening since the other stuff could maybe trigger a physical headache too. I wanted to be perfectly clear about it. I knew if I didn't have any caffeine I didn't get headaches but if I did, I did get headaches every now and again. They wouldn't be migraines but pretty nasty headaches. It's different for different people but it will be interesting to see what happens.

Question: You asked this morning about good-news stories. I had a full experience on Tuesday after the experience with the cut-off stump of my heart and roots and moving around with the breath. I had a fleeting moment at the end of the night and I was walking, and the half moon was up in the sky. There was this beautiful, huge spacious feeling and for a second the spaciousness went off to infinity and I had the experience of being everything. I laughed out loud because it was suddenly so clear I am as much everything in the universe as I am my body, so it doesn't matter if my body disappears or dies because everything I'm experiencing, I can feel I'm that and that will continue. So what is there to be frightened of if I know I'm all this and can continue. But it sort of passed and fear and anxiety have come back. I'm trying to let it go to an extent but hold that experience or the feeling of it.

Linda: Anything that's real will never go away. You don't need to hold it. It will still be there in you.

Question: That spaciousness comes and goes. It feels like it's there all the time but there's too much mental stuff in the way to notice that it's there. But every now and again, through doing this, when things calm down a bit, and the thinking isn't so turbulent, suddenly it tunes in again and you can feel it's there. It's beautiful.

Linda: Did the pain in the head start after that or has it been the whole way through? (No.)

Linda: Yes, the spaciousness, hmm.

Question: Sometimes it feels like it's located in my head. Other times it's nothing to do with me, just something I'm experiencing.

Linda: Often, if you look very closely at something like that, it's like you said, you feel like it's localised but when you look closely you can't really pinpoint where it is.

Question: Sometimes when I'm doing the body scan it feels like that spacious awareness can localise in a different way to the mental putting your attention on your knee which is looking down at your knee from this mental space behind your eyes, versus having a knee sensation in spacious awareness which is a subtly different experience.

Linda: I'm not sure what you mean. Can you say it again?

Question: Sometimes when I'm doing the body-scan I feel I'm looking down at all the bits of the body and the sensation from behind my eyes in my head or from my mind. But at other times it feels like I'm feeling the sensation in my knee just within this spacious awareness that isn't located behind my eyes.

Linda: Yes, do that. So see what happens with your head tomorrow.

Question: Yes, it's feeling quite good now. I'll watch and accept whatever happens.